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ICC APPROVES PLAN TO CONSTRUCT OVERPASSES, IMPROVE SAFETY ON SPRINGFIELD'S SOUTH SIDE

The Illinois Commerce Commission today approved plans for construction of a new highway overpass to carry the MacArthur Boulevard extension over the Norfolk Southern railroad tracks on the south side of Springfield.

The Commission also ordered construction of a separate pedestrian overpass to carry the Interurban Bike Trail over the railroad tracks. Both bridges are expected to improve safety in the area by separating vehicles and pedestrian traffic from rail traffic.

The cost to construct the bridges is estimated at approximately \$15.2 million and will be paid for by the Illinois Department of Transportation, the Grade Crossing Protection Fund, the city of Springfield and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Construction of the new MacArthur Boulevard overpass will allow for the closure of the West Grand Avenue grade crossing and removal of the grade crossing surface and signals by the railroad.

The entire project which includes extending MacArthur from Wabash Avenue south to I-72, acquiring right-of-way, utility relocation, relocation of a portion of the Interurban Trail between the Wabash-MacArthur intersection and I-72, with a pedestrian tunnel under South MacArthur for the bike traffic, closure of the existing West Grand highway-rail grade crossing and construction of the two overpasses, is expected to take about four years and will cost an estimated \$40 million to complete.

The Illinois Department of Transportation will seek bids on the projects in November.

The Commission administers the Grade Crossing Protection Fund, which is motor fuel tax money designated for rail safety improvements.